

NoEnd House

Let me start by saying that Peter Terry was addicted to heroin.

We were friends in college and continued to be after I graduated. Notice that I said "I". He dropped out after two years of barely cutting it. After I moved out of the dorms and into a small apartment, I didn't see Peter as much. We would talk online every now and then (AIM was king in pre-Facebook years). There was a period where he wasn't online for about five weeks straight. I wasn't worried. He was a pretty notorious flake and drug addict, so I assumed he just stopped caring. Then one night I saw him log on. Before I could initiate a conversation, he sent me a message.

"David, man, we need to talk."

That was when he told me about the **NoEnd House**. It got that name because no one had ever reached the final exit. The rules were pretty simple and cliché: reach the final room of the building and you win \$500. There were nine rooms in all. The house was located outside the city, roughly four miles from my house. Apparently Peter had tried and failed. He was a heroin and who-knows-what-the-fuck addict, so I figured the drugs got the best of him and he wiggled out at a paper ghost or something. He told me it would be too much for anyone. That it was unnatural.

I didn't believe him. I told him I would check it out the next night and no matter how hard he tried to convince me otherwise, \$500 sounded too good to be true. I had to go. I set out the following night.

When I arrived, I immediately noticed something strange about the building. Have you ever seen or read something that shouldn't be scary, but for some reason a chill crawls up your spine? I walked toward the building and the feeling of uneasiness only intensified as I opened the front door.

My heart slowed and I let a relieved sigh leave me as I entered. The room looked like a normal hotel lobby decorated for Halloween. A sign was posted in place of a worker. It read, "Room 1 this way. Eight more follow. Reach the end and you win!" I chuckled and made my way to the first door.

The first area was almost laughable. The decor resembled the Halloween aisle of a K-Mart, complete with sheet ghosts and animatronic zombies that gave a static growl when you passed by. At the far end was an exit; it was the only door besides the one I entered through. I brushed through the fake spider webs and headed for the second room.

I was greeted by fog as I opened the door to room two. The room definitely upped the

ante in terms of technology. Not only was there a fog machine, but a bat hung from the ceiling and flew in a circle. Scary. They seemed to have a Halloween soundtrack that one would find in a 99 cent store on loop somewhere in the room. I didn't see a stereo, but I guessed they must have used a PA system. I stepped over a few toy rats that wheeled around and walked with a puffed chest across to the next area.

I reached for the doorknob and my heart sank to my knees. I did not want to open that door. A feeling of dread hit me so hard I could barely even think. Logic overtook me after a few terrified moments, and I shook it off and entered the next room.

Room three is when things began to change.

On the surface, it looked like a normal room. There was a chair in the middle of the wood paneled floor. A single lamp in the corner did a poor job of lighting the area, casting a few shadows across the floor and walls. That was the problem. Shadows. Plural.

With the exception of the chair's, there were others. I had barely walked in the door and I was already terrified. It was at that moment that I knew something wasn't right. I didn't even think as I automatically tried to open the door I came through. It was locked from the other side.

That set me off. Was someone locking the doors as I progressed? There was no way. I would have heard them. Was it a mechanical lock that set automatically? Maybe. But I was too scared to really think. I turned back to the room and the shadows were gone. The chair's shadow remained, but the others were gone. I slowly began to walk. I used to hallucinate when I was a kid, so I wrote off the shadows as a figment of my imagination. I began to feel better as I made it to the halfway point of the room. I looked down as I took my steps and that's when I saw it.

Or didn't see it. My shadow wasn't there. I didn't have time to scream. I ran as fast as I could to the other door and flung myself without thinking into the room beyond.

The fourth room was possibly the most disturbing. As I closed the door, all light seemed to be sucked out and put back into the previous room. I stood there, surrounded by darkness, not able to move. I'm not afraid of the dark and never have been, but I was absolutely terrified. All sight had left me. I held my hand in front of my face and if I didn't know what I was doing, I would never have been able to tell. Darkness doesn't describe it. I couldn't hear anything. It was dead silence. When you're in a sound-proof room, you can still hear yourself breathing. You can hear yourself being alive.

I couldn't.

I began to stumble forward after a few moments, my rapidly beating heart the only thing I could feel. There was no door in sight. Wasn't even sure there was one this time. The

silence was then broken by a low hum.

I felt something behind me. I spun around wildly but could barely even see my nose. I knew it was there, though. Regardless of how dark it was, I knew something was there. The hum grew louder, closer. It seemed to surround me, but I knew whatever was causing the noise was in front of me, inching closer. I took a step back; I had never felt that kind of fear. I can't really describe true fear. I wasn't even scared I was going to die; I was scared of what the alternative was. I was afraid of what this thing had in store for me. Then the lights flashed for a second and I saw it.

Nothing. I saw nothing and I know I saw nothing there. The room was again plunged into darkness and the hum became a wild screech. I screamed in protest; I couldn't hear this goddamn sound for another minute. I ran backwards, away from the noise, and fumbled for the door handle. I turned and fell into room five.

Before I describe room five, you have to understand something. I am not a drug addict. I have had no history of drug abuse or any sort of psychosis short of the childhood hallucinations I mentioned earlier, and those were only when I was really tired or just waking up. I entered the NoEnd House with a clear head.

After falling in from the previous room, my view of room five was from my back, looking up at the ceiling. What I saw didn't scare me; it simply surprised me. Trees had grown into the room and towered above my head. The ceilings in this room were taller than the others, which made me think I was in the center of the house. I got up off the floor, dusted myself off, and took a look around. It was definitely the biggest room of them all. I couldn't even see the door from where I was; various brush and trees must have blocked my line of sight with the exit.

Up to this point, I figured the rooms were going to get scarier, but this was a paradise compared to the last room. I also assumed whatever was in room four stayed back there. I was incredibly wrong.

As I made my way deeper into the room, I began to hear what one would hear if they were in a forest; chirping bugs and the occasional flap of birds seemed to be my only company in this room. That was the thing that bothered me the most. I heard the bugs and other animals, but I didn't see any of them. I began to wonder how big this house was. From the outside when I first walked up to it, it looked like a regular house. It was definitely on the bigger side, but this was almost a full forest in here. The canopy covered my view of the ceiling, but I assumed it was still there, however high it was. I couldn't see any walls, either. The only way I knew I was still inside was that the floor matched the other rooms: the standard dark wood paneling.

I kept walking, hoping that the next tree I passed would reveal the door. After a few moments of walking, I felt a mosquito fly onto my arm. I shook it off and kept going. A second later, I felt about ten more land on my skin at different places. I felt them crawl up and down my arms and legs and a few made their way across my face. I flailed wildly to get them all off but they just kept crawling. I looked down and let out a muffled scream - more of a whimper, to be honest. I didn't see a single bug. Not one bug was on me, but I could feel them crawl. I heard them fly by my face and sting my skin but I couldn't see a single one. I dropped to the ground and began to roll wildly. I was desperate. I hated bugs, especially ones I couldn't see or touch. But these bugs could touch me and they were everywhere.

I began to crawl. I had no idea where I was going; the entrance was nowhere in sight and I still hadn't even seen the exit. So I just crawled, my skin wriggling with the presence of those phantom bugs. After what seemed like hours, I found the door. I grabbed the nearest tree and propped myself up, mindlessly slapping my arms and legs to no avail. I tried to run, but I couldn't; my body was exhausted from crawling and dealing with whatever it was that was on me. I took a few shaky steps to the door, grabbing each tree on the way for support.

It was only a few feet away when I heard it. The low hum from before. It was coming from the next room and it was deeper. I could almost feel it inside my body, like when you stand next to an amp at a concert. The feeling of the bugs on me lessened as the hum grew louder. As I placed my hand on the doorknob, the bugs were completely gone but I couldn't bring myself to turn the knob. I knew that if I let go, the bugs would return and there was no way I would make it back to room four. I just stood there, my head pressed against the door marked six and my hand shakily grasping the knob. The hum was so loud I couldn't even hear myself pretend to think. There was nothing I could do but move on. Room six was next, and room six was Hell.

I closed the door behind me, my eyes held shut and my ears ringing. The hum was surrounding me. As the door clicked into place, the hum was gone. I opened my eyes in surprise and the door I had shut was gone. It was just a wall now. I looked around in shock. The room was identical to room three - the same chair and lamp - but with the correct amount of shadows this time. The only real difference was that there was no exit door and the one I came in through was gone. As I said before, I had no previous issues in terms of mental instability, but at that moment I fell into what I now know was insanity. I didn't scream. I didn't make a sound.

At first I scratched softly. The wall was tough, but I knew the door was there somewhere. I just knew it was. I scratched at where the doorknob was. I clawed at the wall frantically with both hands, my nails being filed down to the skin against the wood. I fell silently to

my knees, the only sound in the room the incessant scratching against the wall. I knew it was there. The door was there, I knew it was just there. I knew if I could just get past this wall -

"Are you alright?"

I jumped off the ground and spun in one motion. I leaned against the wall behind me and I saw what it was that spoke to me; to this day I regret ever turning around.

There was a little girl. She was wearing a soft, white dress that went down to her ankles. She had long blonde hair to the middle of her back and white skin and blue eyes. She was the most frightening thing I had ever seen, and I know that nothing in my life will ever be as unnerving as what I saw in her. While looking at her, I saw something else. Where she stood I saw what looked like a man's body, only larger than normal and covered in hair. He was naked from head to toe, but his head was not human and his toes were hooves. It wasn't the Devil, but at that moment it might as well have been. The form had the head of a ram and the snout of a wolf.

It was horrifying and it was synonymous with the little girl in front of me. They were the same form. I can't really describe it, but I saw them at the same time. They shared the same spot in that room, but it was like looking at two separate dimensions. When I saw the girl I saw the form, and when I saw the form I saw the girl. I couldn't speak. I could barely even see. My mind was revolting against what it was attempting to process. I had been scared before in my life and I had never been more scared than when I was trapped in the fourth room, but that was before room six. I just stood there, staring at whatever it was that spoke to me. There was no exit. I was trapped here with it. And then it spoke again.

"David, you should have listened."

When it spoke, I heard the words of the little girl, but the other form spoke through my mind in a voice I won't attempt to describe. There was no other sound. The voice just kept repeating that sentence over and over in my mind and I agreed. I didn't know what to do. I was slipping into madness, yet couldn't take my eyes off what was in front of me. I dropped to the floor. I thought I had passed out, but the room wouldn't let me. I just wanted it to end. I was on my side, my eyes wide open and the form staring down at me. Scurrying across the floor in front of me was one of the battery-powered rats from the second room.

The house was toying with me. But for some reason, seeing that rat pulled my mind back from whatever depths it was headed and I looked around the room. I was getting out of there. I was determined to get out of that house and live and never think about this place

again. I knew this room was Hell and I wasn't ready to take up a residency. At first, it was just my eyes that moved. I searched the walls for any kind of opening. The room wasn't that big, so it didn't take long to soak up the entire layout. The demon still taunted me, the voice growing louder as the form stayed rooted where it stood. I placed my hand on the floor, lifted myself up to all four and turned to scan the wall behind me.

Then I saw something I couldn't believe. The form was now right at my back, whispering into my mind how I shouldn't have come. I felt its breath on the back of my neck, but I refused to turn around. A large rectangle was scratched into the wood, with a small dent chipped away in the center of it. Right in front of my eyes I saw the large seven I had mindlessly etched into the wall. I knew what it was: room seven was just beyond that wall where room five was moments ago.

I don't know how I had done it - maybe it was just my state of mind at the time - but I had created the door. I knew I had. In my madness, I had scratched into the wall what I needed the most: an exit to the next room. Room seven was close. I knew the demon was right behind me, but for some reason it couldn't touch me. I closed my eyes and placed both hands on the large seven in front of me. I pushed. I pushed as hard as I could. The demon was now screaming in my ear. It told me I was never leaving. It told me that this was the end but I wasn't going to die; I was going to live there in room six with it. I wasn't. I pushed and screamed at the top of my lungs. I knew I was going to push through the wall eventually.

I clenched my eyes shut and screamed, and the demon was gone. I was left in silence. I turned around slowly and was greeted by the room as it was when I entered: just a chair and a lamp. I couldn't believe it, but I didn't have time to well. I turned back to the seven and jumped back slightly. What I saw was a door. It wasn't the one I had scratched in, but a regular door with a large seven on it. My whole body was shaking. It took me a while to turn the knob. I just stood there for a while, staring at the door. I couldn't stay in room six. I couldn't. But if this was only room six, I couldn't imagine what seven had in store. I must have stood there for an hour, just staring at the seven. Finally, with a deep breath, I twisted the knob and opened the door to room seven.

I stumbled through the door mentally exhausted and physically weak. The door behind me closed and I realized where I was. I was outside. Not outside like room five, but actually outside. My eyes stung. I wanted to cry. I fell to my knees and tried but I couldn't. I was finally out of that hell. I didn't even care about the prize that was promised. I turned and saw that the door I just went through was the entrance. I walked to my car and drove home, thinking of how nice a shower sounded.

As I pulled up to my house, I felt uneasy. The joy of leaving NoEnd House had faded and

dread was slowly building in my stomach. I shook it off as residual from the house and made my way to the front door. I entered and immediately went up to my room. There on my bed was my cat, Baskerville. He was the first living thing I had seen all night and I reached to pet him. He hissed and swiped at my hand. I recoiled in shock, as he had never acted like that. I thought, "Whatever, he's an old cat." I jumped in the shower and got ready for what I was expecting to be a sleepless night.

After my shower, I went to the kitchen to make something to eat. I descended the stairs and turned into the family room; what I saw would be forever burned into my mind, however. My parents were lying on the ground, naked and covered in blood. They were mutilated to near-unidentifiable states. Their limbs were removed and placed next to their bodies, and their heads were placed on their chests facing me. The most unsettling part was their expressions. They were smiling, as though they were happy to see me. I vomited and sobbed there in the family room. I didn't know what had happened; they didn't even live with me at the time. I was a mess. Then I saw it: a door that was never there before. A door with a large eight scrawled on it in blood.

I was still in the house. I was standing in my family room but I was in room seven. The faces of my parents smiled wider as I realized this. They weren't my parents; they couldn't be, but they looked exactly like them. The door marked eight was across the room, behind the mutilated bodies in front of me. I knew I had to move on, but at that moment I gave up. The smiling faces tore into my mind; they grounded me where I stood. I vomited again and nearly collapsed. Then the hum returned. It was louder than ever and it filled the house and shook the walls. The hum compelled me to walk.

I began to walk slowly, making my way closer to the door and the bodies. I could barely stand, let alone walk, and the closer I got to my parents the closer I came to suicide. The walls were now shaking so hard it seemed as though they were going to crumble, but still the faces smiled at me. As I inched closer, their eyes followed me. I was now between the two bodies, a few feet away from the door. The dismembered hands clawed their way across the carpet towards me, all while the faces continued to stare. New terror washed over me and I walked faster. I didn't want to hear them speak. I didn't want the voices to match those of my parents. They began to open their mouths and the hands were inches from my feet. In a dash of desperation, I lunged toward the door, threw it open, and slammed it behind me. Room eight.

I was done. After what I had just experienced, I knew there wasn't anything else this fucking house could throw at me that I couldn't live through. There was nothing short of the fires of Hell that I wasn't ready for. Unfortunately, I underestimated the abilities of NoEnd House. Unfortunately, things got more disturbing, more terrifying, and more unspeakable in room eight.

I still have trouble believing what I saw in room eight. Again, the room was a carbon copy of rooms three and six, but sitting in the usually empty chair was a man. After a few seconds of disbelief, my mind finally accepted the fact that the man sitting in the chair was me. Not someone who looked like me; it was David Williams. I walked closer. I had to get a better look even though I was sure of it. He looked up at me and I noticed tears in his eyes.

"Please... please, don't do it. Please, don't hurt me."

"What?" I asked. "Who are you? I'm not going to hurt you."

"Yes you are..." He was sobbing now. "You're going to hurt me and I don't want you to." He sat in the chair with his legs up and began rocking back and forth. It was actually pretty pathetic looking, especially since he was me, identical in every way.

"Listen, who are you?" I was now only a few feet from my doppelgänger. It was the weirdest experience yet, standing there talking to myself. I wasn't scared, but I would be soon. "Why are you-"

"You're going to hurt me you're going to hurt me if you want to leave you're going to hurt me."

"Why are you saying this? Just calm down, alright? Let's try and figure this-" And then I saw it. The David sitting down was wearing the same clothes as me, except for a small red patch on his shirt embroidered with the number nine.

"You're going to hurt me you're going to hurt me don't please you're going to hurt me..."

My eyes didn't leave that small number on his chest. I knew exactly what it was. The first few doors were plain and simple, but after a while they got a little more ambiguous. Seven was scratched into the wall, but by my own hands. Eight was marked in blood above the bodies of my parents. But nine - this number was on a person, a living person. Worse still, it was on a person that looked exactly like me.

"David?" I had to ask.

"Yes... you're going to hurt me you're going to hurt me..." He continued to sob and rock.

He answered to David. He was me, right down to the voice. But that nine. I paced around for a few minutes while he sobbed in his chair. The room had no door and, similarly to room six, the door I came through was gone. For some reason, I assumed that scratching would get me nowhere this time. I studied the walls and floor around the chair, sticking my head underneath and seeing if anything was below. Unfortunately, there was. Below the chair was a knife. Attached was a tag that read, "To David - From Management."

The feeling in my stomach as I read that tag was something sinister. I wanted to throw up and the last thing I wanted to do was remove that knife from under that chair. The other David was still sobbing uncontrollably. My mind was spinning into an attic of unanswerable questions. Who put this here and how did they get my name? Not to mention the fact that as I knelt on the cold wood floor I also sat in that chair, sobbing in protest of being hurt by myself. It was all too much to process. The house and the management had been playing with me this whole time. My thoughts for some reason turned to Peter and whether or not he got this far. If he did, if he met a Peter Terry sobbing in this very chair, rocking back and forth... I shook those thoughts out of my head; they didn't matter. I took the knife from under the chair and immediately the other David went quiet.

"David," He said in my voice, "What do you think you're going to do?"

I lifted myself from the ground and clenched the knife in my hand.

"I'm going to get out of here."

David was still sitting in the chair, though he was very calm now. He looked up at me with a slight grin. I couldn't tell if he was going to laugh or strangle me. Slowly, he got up from the chair and stood, facing me. It was uncanny. His height and even the way he stood matched mine. I felt the rubber hilt of the knife in my hand and gripped it tighter. I don't know what I was planning on doing with it, but I had a feeling I was going to need it.

"Now," his voice was slightly deeper than my own. "I'm going to hurt you. I'm going to hurt you and I'm going to keep you here." I didn't respond. I just lunged and tackled him to the ground. I had mounted him and looked down, knife poised and ready. He looked up at me, terrified. It was like I was looking in a mirror. Then the hum returned, low and distant, though I still felt it deep in my body. David looked up at me as I looked down at myself. The hum was getting louder and I felt something inside me snap. With one motion, I slammed the knife into the patch on his chest and ripped down. Blackness fell on the room and I was falling.

The darkness around me was like nothing I had experienced up to that point. Room four was dark, but it didn't come close to what was completely engulfing me. I wasn't even sure if I was falling after a while. I felt weightless, covered in dark. Then a deep sadness came over me. I felt lost, depressed, and suicidal. The sight of my parents entered my mind. I knew it wasn't real, but I had seen it and the mind has trouble differentiating between what is real and what isn't. The sadness only deepened. I was in room nine for what seemed like days. The final room. And that's exactly what it was: the end. NoEnd House had an end and I had reached it. At that moment, I gave up. I knew I would be in that in-between state forever, accompanied by nothing but darkness. Not even the hum

was there to keep me sane.

I had lost all senses. I couldn't feel myself. I couldn't hear anything. Sight was completely useless here. I searched for a taste in my mouth and found nothing. I felt disembodied and completely lost. I knew where I was. This was Hell. Room nine was Hell. Then it happened. A light. One of those stereotypical lights at the end of the tunnel. I felt ground come up from below me and I was standing. After a moment or two of gathering my thoughts and senses, I slowly walked toward that light.

As I approached the light, it took form. It was a vertical slit down the side of an unmarked door. I slowly walked through the door and found myself back where I started: the lobby of NoEnd House. It was exactly how I left it: still empty, still decorated with childish Halloween decorations. After everything that had happened that night, I was still wary of where I was. After a few moments of normalcy, I looked around the place trying to find anything different. On the desk was a plain white envelope with my name handwritten on it. Immensely curious, yet still cautious, I mustered up the courage to open the envelope. Inside was a letter, again handwritten.

David Williams,

Congratulations! You have made it to the end of NoEnd House! Please accept this prize as a token of great achievement.

*Yours forever,
Management.*

With the letter were five \$100 bills.

I couldn't stop laughing. I laughed for what seemed like hours. I laughed as I walked out to my car and laughed as I drove home. I laughed as I pulled into my driveway. I laughed as I opened my front door to my house and laughed as I saw the small ten etched into the wood.